
Minutes:

First Meeting of the Men's Health Week 2012 Planning Group

Date: Wednesday 8th February 2012
Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm (followed by lunch)
Venue: Video-link between the offices of the Institute of Public Health in Dublin and Belfast

Present:

Dublin ...

Lorcan Brennan - Men's Development Network (MDN)
Andrew Castles - Safefood
Marita Hennessy - Trinity College Dublin (TCD)
Vincent McCarthy - Inspire Ireland Foundation
Finian Murray - HSE Dublin / North East
Darach Murphy - Men Alone in No-mans-land (MAIN)
Ann Scanlon - Irish Heart Foundation (IHF)
Ray Tonge - Men As Learners and Elders (MALES Ireland)

Belfast ...

Angela Corr - Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT)
Colin Fowler - Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)
Michael Lynch - Men's Action Network (MAN)
Geraldine McDonnell - Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT)
Sonia Montgomery - Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT)
Paul O'Kane - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT)
Lisa Rickett - Irish Football Association (IFA)
Gary Smyth - Man Matters

Apologies:

John Cantwell - Fír Le Cheile (Men Together)
Martin Daly - Early Years
Michael Dillon - Men Ending Domestic Abuse (MEND)
Ruth Fitzsimmons - British Medical Association NI (BMA NI)
Sandra Gordon - Man Alive, Ulster Cancer Foundation
Darren Lawless - Niamh (Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health)
Keith McAdam - Sure Start Fathers Network
Michael McKenna - YouthAction Northern Ireland
Ruairi McKiernan - Community.ie
Jessica Perry - Northern Ireland Chest, Heart and Stroke (NICHs)
Peter Shaw - Belfast Community Sports Development Network (BCSDN)
Ted Tierney - Mental Health Ireland
Joanne Vance - Irish Cancer Society

Minute Taker: Colin Fowler

AGENDA ITEMS ...

1. Welcome

Colin welcomed everyone to the meeting - especially those people who had to make a considerable journey to be here. To minimise travel time for participants, it was felt that this meeting should take place via video-conference. However, it was also recognised that this is not, necessarily, an ideal mechanism for discussion.

Apologies were tendered from a broad range of organisations - indeed, from almost as many people as had been able to attend. This was due to the date not suiting everyone. These people do, however, still wish to be involved in the process of looking at what can be done to mark and celebrate Men's Health Week (MHW) this year. Colin is still awaiting replies from a number of other organisations.

Colin informed the meeting that there are many other groups who could have been invited to attend this gathering but, to be pragmatic, it was decided to only contact those who had been involved in the planning process for previous Men's Health Weeks, as well as some others suggested by members of this body. He reminded everyone that this is an open forum which welcomes the input of anyone who is willing to contribute.

The partnership approach adopted in the past few years has proved to be very beneficial to MHW, and it is hoped that each participant's own area of work will also benefit from the contacts established in this and future meetings. It was acknowledged that there will, inevitably, be times when it is impossible for group members to attend meetings or contribute to the ongoing e-discussions.

2. Introductions

Lorcan invited everyone to introduce themselves - by way of helping to get to know each other and to understand the work that each person is involved in. Individuals were asked to: give their name; say which organisation they represent and what it does; outline any experience / knowledge of men's work or Men's Health Week that they already have.

This session highlighted the vast range of experience / areas of interest in the room including: suicide, smoking cessation, primary care, sexual health, education, family work, mental health, counselling, football, community relations, research, training, social isolation, policy development, children, help-seeking behaviour, young men, domestic abuse and violence, personal development, online support, heart health, diet and nutrition, spirituality and rites of passage, advocacy ...

3. Overview of MHFI and MHW

Finian gave a short PowerPoint presentation on: what the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI) is / does, the aim of International Men's Health Week (MHW) each year, and what has previously been organised to mark this week. He also outlined the focus, theme and key message for 2012. Please see the attached Portable Document Format (PDF) file for a copy of this presentation.

4. Vision / 'Blue Skies' Thinking for MHW 2012

Michael invited everyone to think about what MHW 2012 should / could / ought to look like this year, and to discuss the proposed theme and focus. The suggestions made included ...

- Men are not one homogenous group who all like sport, or prefer practical things, or drink, a lot or lack cooking skills, or ignore their health needs ... It is, therefore, impossible to find one core thing which will attract / engage / resonate with all men. Therefore, we have to be realistic, and to recognise that we need to identify 'best fits' and to be pragmatic.
- The overall theme of 'First Instinct' was seen as being relevant and inclusive enough to engage a diverse range of organisations and, hopefully, their catchment groups.
- We need to make sure that we don't promote a 'deficit model' of men and their health i.e. focus upon their problems and shortcomings. Negative male stereotypes are already prevalent in our society, and we shouldn't add to them.
- 'Men's health' needs to be seen in the broadest sense e.g. physical, mental, emotional, spiritual etc.
- It is important to get a 'buy in' from men themselves.
- The Planning Group partners could play a huge role in advertising and promoting MHW 2012 by utilising their own newsletters, eZines, websites, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts etc.
- Whether we like it or not, this is going to be a 'summer of sport' - especially with the European Championships and the Olympics. This will provide (at least for some people) a lot of positive energy which we may be able to harness a little of.
- Although Northern Ireland is not competing in the European Championships, there will still be a lot of male interest in the tournament within this jurisdiction. While recognising that football is not important to everyone, it may provide an easy route into catching the attention of quite a few males of all ages in Ireland.
- Like last year, it would be important to have a common MHW poster that can be used by anyone who wishes to promote and support the week. As well as providing useful publicity and exposure, displaying a poster also offers an easy and practical way for organisations to be involved in MHW.
- In 2011, some organisations asked for permission to adapt the core poster to include the details of their own events on it. Colin will try to ensure that this is possible again this year.
- The Man Matters project (a partnership between the Workers' Educational Association, Men's Health Forum in Ireland, Parenting NI and Home-Start NI) will offer a small pot of money to underwrite the design of the posters and to print them for Northern Irish organisations. MHFI will cover the cost of poster production for the Republic of Ireland.
- There were a range of suggestions offered as to how the week should be portrayed in these posters, and what the core message / tone of them should be. These included:

- Keep it very simple, with a strong image and few words.
 - Be aware that certain words / forms of language can act as a barrier to engaging men.
 - Don't preach too much at men.
 - Have a humorous (possibly even a sacrilegious) slant to the posters. This works better than scare tactics.
 - Find something to instantly attract men.
 - Avoid the common fixation with seeing men as a problem.
 - Be positive, but not unrealistic or 'airy-fairy'.
 - Represent health and well-being in its broadest sense.
 - Don't focus solely upon stereotypically 'male' things.
 - Try to find a generic message / tagline which will appeal to a very diverse range of men.
- The potential wording / imagery proposed included:
 - 'First Instinct - What's Yours? ... fight, flight or find out' (This could be represented by, for example, a baby boy dressed-up as a builder outside a GP's surgery / men's centre / counselling agency / gym etc).
 - 'SCORE - **S**top. **C**onsider **O**ptions. **R**ethink. **E**ngage'.
 - 'What's Your Score?' (Relate this to health measurements, for example, blood pressure / cholesterol level / daily consumption of alcohol / skin age etc).
 - 'You've Scored' (Image of goal scorer celebrating after getting a good Men's Health MOT or NCT report / hitting a health related target marked out in the goal net).
 - Create a parody of the 'Basic Instinct' film.
 - 'Don't wait until there's a crisis'.
 - 'Trust your first instinct. Seek help when you need it'.
 - 'Is your first instinct to seek help when you need it?'
 - 'Because you're worth it!'
 - 'Trust your first instinct. UR Worth It'.
 - 'Your life needs you in it' (This could, perhaps, parody Lord Kitchener's 'Your Country Needs You!' poster during World War I) ...
- ... or use a combination of these suggestions.
- As there is no budget for employing a graphic designer to prepare mock-ups of a wide variety of concepts (nor for a marketing company to field test these ideas), it was agreed that each member of the Planning Group will undertake their own (unscientific) field testing. This will involve asking their work colleagues / friends for an opinion on the above suggestions for the poster, and collating any additional suggestions for concepts. Colin will write to everyone with a deadline for return of this feedback.

- Whatever poster idea is adopted, we should consider including a QR (Quick Response) Code on it which links to the MHW Facebook page and/or some other useful online resource.
- Michael knows an IT student who has offered to help us to develop a Phone App for MHW 2012. Everyone was asked to submit ideas and suggestions for a project in this area as soon as possible. These should be forwarded to Colin.

5. Existing Plans for Men's Health Week

Colin invited everyone to share any plans that their own organisation might have to mark Men's Health Week 2012. These included ...

- MHFI - Will organise the design / printing of posters and logos; collate and promote details of activities throughout Ireland; research a briefing paper on MHW; offer a signposting role; prepare a document on 'what can I do to mark this week'; provide an online information hub (website, Facebook and Twitter); inform the media.
- MAN - Hope to offer health checks and complementary therapy sessions in the North West during the week.
- Man Matters - Will support local groups (via funding and skills input) to organise activities throughout Northern Ireland.
- NHSCT - Hope to work with sporting bodies to organise a men's health seminar, and provide training for bar staff in their catchment area.
- IFA - Will work with a range of soccer-focused groups on men's health needs / checks / advice before MHW, and support community based events (e.g. with young homeless and refugee men) during the week.
- WHSCT - Planning to run a range of men's health events and health checks across the Western Health Trust area in partnership with local organisations.
- SHSCT - Build upon the success of their recent seminar on 'Putting Men's Health onto the Agenda'; consolidate the new men's health network in the Southern area; disseminate information; seek engagement with Primary Care providers.
- BHSCT - Run two large events: one in Belfast City Hall (Wednesday) offering health checks, complementary therapies and information, and a workshop for practitioners on how concepts of masculinity impacts upon young men's health (Friday).
- IHF - Will be encouraging workplace based men's health initiatives, and circulating their range of men's health information.
- Inspire Ireland - Hope to launch the new online 'WorkOut' programme to help young men improve their mental fitness (in partnership with MHFI). They will also be involved in a college-based programme - via Student Unions - before MHW, and will target young men through the ReachOut initiative.
- MAIN - Will seek to encourage men's groups in the greater-Dublin area to celebrate MHW 2012, and will continue men's work initiatives linked to Darach's PhD studies.

- TCD - Marita's current project within TCD will be coming to an end soon, but she is willing to offer her insight and skills in the field of men's health research / programme delivery to other groups.
- HSE - Finian will be distributing posters, writing articles for health-related publications, supporting local men's initiatives, taking part in media interviews, and playing a coordinating role within the Republic of Ireland.
- MDN - Hope to have a MHW launch event in the South East, to hold a photographic (and other creative media) exhibition on men's lives in Wexford Library, and to use the theme of MHW 2012 for the annual MDN Men's Summer School later in the year.
- MALES - Will promote MHW 2012 on their website, via their contacts, and by displaying / distributing posters.
- Safefood - Is holding an all-island event on workplace-based programmes on Tuesday 19th June 2012. They will also use their online contacts and presence to publicise MHW.

6. Action Points

- ✓ MHFI will secure funding for the design and printing of a MHW 2012 poster and other promotional graphics.
- ✓ Each member of the Planning Group will undertake their own 'field testing' on ideas for the MHW 2012 poster. This will involve asking their work colleagues / friends for an opinion on the suggestions already tendered, and sending any additional suggestions to Colin.
- ✓ Colin will investigate how to generate a QR code for the posters.
- ✓ Everyone is asked to submit ideas for the development of a Phone App for MHW 2012. These should be forwarded to Colin as soon as possible.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Although everyone recognised the limitations of using a video-link to hold this meeting, the benefits were seen to outweigh the drawbacks. Therefore, it was agreed that the next meeting should also be conducted via video-conference between the Dublin and Belfast offices of the Institute of Public Health in Ireland. This will take place on Thursday 19th April 2012, from 10.30am - 12.30pm, and will be followed by lunch.